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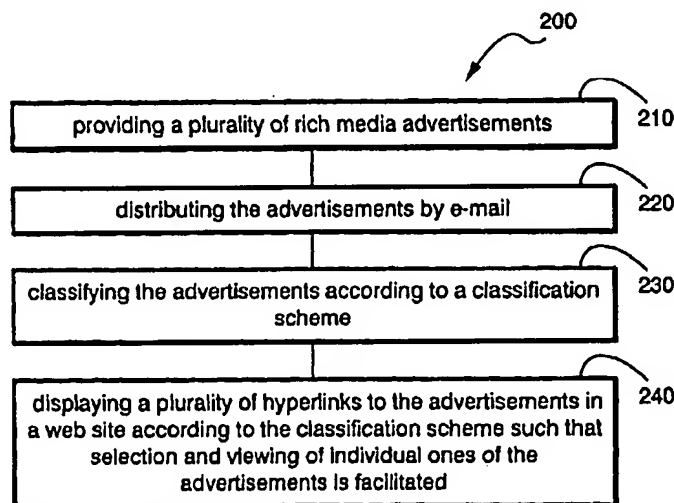
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: **SYSTEMS AND METHODS OF CONDUCTING AN ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN**



(57) Abstract: An advertising campaign includes e-mail distribution of rich media advertisements, and general public accessibility of the advertisements through a web site using a classification scheme. The advertisements are preferably non-static in that they include at least some sort of animation, audio, or video clip, and are either B2C or B2C focused. The e-mail distribution is preferably conducted on a virtual prospecting basis. Preferred classification schemes use products being advertised, relevant dates, targeted populations, or some combination of these. The web site is preferably served by a searching service, such as a search engine, with advertisements being accessed directly using their own URL addresses. The advertisements may be funded by a single advertiser, or more than one advertiser, and at least some of the advertisements may include cross-branding for multiple advertisers.

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*For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.*

## SYSTEMS AND METHODS OF CONDUCTING AN ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

### Field of The Invention

The field of the invention is electronic marketing.

### 5 Background of The Invention

At present, electronic advertisements (e-commercials) are widely employed in marketing. E-commercials can be especially valuable when they incorporate a feature that cannot readily be duplicated by the broadcast media of television or radio. One such feature is the ready interactivity of e-commercials. Numerous e-commercials are now being offered  
10 with hyperlinks to web sites, order forms, and other examples of interactivity.

E-commercials are also attractive marketing vehicles because they are extremely variable in scope and format. Television type audio/video advertisements, for example, can be adapted to be displayed in a window on a computer screen. Radio type advertisements that depend largely on the playing of a popular song or other audio track can also be readily  
15 adapted for computer presentation.

Surprisingly, the variability in e-commercial content has not been matched by variability in distribution. To date, e-commercials are either passively positioned in web sites where they can be selected for play by a visitor to the sites, or actively distributed as part of an e-mail. But such limited exposure ignores other possibilities that may be advantageous to  
20 advertisers, viewers, or both.

Thus, there is a need to provide methods and systems for distribution of e-commercials by methods other than passive positioning in web sites, and active distribution in e-mails.

### Summary of the Invention

25 The present invention provides systems and methods of conducting an advertising campaign in which rich media advertisements are distributed by e-mail, and also made accessible to the general public through a web site using a classification scheme.

Rich media advertisements are preferably non-static in that they include at least some sort of animation, audio, or video clip. Such advertisements are also preferably directed towards marketing consumer oriented products and services (such as business to consumer), or business oriented products and services (such as business to business).

- 5       The e-mail distribution is preferably conducted on a virtual prospecting basis, with marketing agents selecting a plurality of prospective viewers from a list of prospects, selecting at least one of the plurality of advertisements from a list of advertisements, and sending a copy of the selected advertisement to each of the prospective viewers.

- 10       Preferred classification schemes classify according to products being advertised, relevant dates, targeted populations, or some combination of these. In particularly preferred embodiments the web site is a page served by a searching service, such as a search engine, in a table that is custom designed for a searcher. The advertisements can advantageously be accessed directly using their own URL addresses, and cells of the table can contain active hyperlinks to such addresses. The advertisements may be funded by a single advertiser, or  
15       more than one advertiser, and at least some of the advertisements may include cross-branding for multiple advertisers. The web site through which the various advertisements are made accessible displaying the various hyperlinks may or may not be controlled by a company that funds any of the advertising.

- 20       Various objects, features, aspects, and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description of preferred embodiments of the invention, along with the accompanying drawings in which like numerals represent like components.

#### **Brief Description of the Drawing**

- 25       Fig. 1 is a schematic of a portion of a web page in which various e-commercials are classified for convenient access.

Fig. 2 is a flow chart of a preferred method according to the present invention.

#### **Detailed Description**

In Figure 1 a web page 10 includes a title section 20, and multiple classification sections 30 that each contain a descriptor 32, and multiple icons 34A - 34F, 34A - 34E, and

34A - 34D, respectively, for linking to rich media advertisements such as advertisement 36 that advertises a movie video (not shown).

The web page 10 is exemplary only, and its layout should not be interpreted to limit the scope of contemplated alternative layouts. Indeed, there are an infinite number of alternative layouts, involving possibly multiple pages, various frames, tables, and so on. The only critical limitation above and beyond that required for any web site is that the web page must include some sort of classification scheme for classifying the various hyperlinks.

The title section 20 is entirely optional, and where present can take any form whatsoever. Here, the title section 20 simply announces the title of the hypothetical web site, "The Movie's On Us™" and further includes the hypothetical tag line "Current Picks".

The classification sections 30 are part of a classification scheme that involves several types of movies. The classification scheme may be expressly displayed, as for example is done here using descriptors 32, or may be only inherent in the page layout (not shown) or inherent in some other manner. Preferred classification schemes classify according to any suitable parameter or parameters, including by way of example, products being advertised in the advertisements. Other contemplated classification schemes may classify according to dates that are relevant to the advertisements, their contents, or both. For example, advertisements marketing concert tickets may advantageously be classified according to advertisement posting dates, or perhaps the concert dates. Still other contemplated classification schemes may classify according to targeted populations, such as by gender, age group, income level, sports or other interests, and so forth.

The descriptor 32 is entirely optional, but is expected to be helpful in helping viewers to locate desired advertisements. Icons 34A - 34E may be quite generic in appearance, but more preferably have distinctive appearances that also assist viewers in locating desired advertisements. Thus, for example, an icon that hyperlinks to a movie review may have an appearance that is recognizably coupled with the movie being reviewed, and contemplated icon appearances for movies may include a movie title, logo, or slogan. Icons 34A - 34E may also be greater or fewer in number than that depicted in Figure 1, both overall, and for any of the classifications.

Rich media advertisement 36 is preferably an e-commercial in the form of an executable file, which is defined herein to mean a file that is directly interpreted or executed by the operating system of a computer as opposed to being "played" by player software. Rich media advertisements are preferably transmitted, along with all software needed to track or play the advertisement, as a single file. Other options, however, are also contemplated. For example, it is contemplated that advertisements, and perhaps the tracking or playing software, can be transmitted as multiple files. Or the advertisement can be transmitted as a single file, and contain software instructions that cause the host computer to produce a plurality of files that interact to display the advertisement. It is also contemplated that some or all of the advertisement or supporting software can be downloaded separately from the transmission that includes the advertisement. For example, it is contemplated that a fully functioning, multi-page advertisement can be transmitted in an e-mail message. When the viewer opens the advertisement, or perhaps reaches a given point in the presentation, his system contacts a distant server to download additional pages. Multi-page advertisements of this type are disclosed in previously filed application serial no. PCT/US99/23822 corresponding to attorney docket 604.09, which is incorporated herein by reference.

Rich media advertisement 36 may advantageously have several parts, including a video window 36A, one or more video controls 36B, 36C, hyperlinks 36D to other pages (not shown), and an ordering button 36E. The rich media advertisement 36 may itself have numerous pages (not shown) that can be navigated by a viewer without leaving the advertisement. It is especially preferred that rich media advertisements will include at least one branding graphic 36F, which is used herein to include a logo, trademark, trade name, slogan, or any other indicia of origin of a product or service.

It is contemplated that rich media advertisement 36 may be dynamically constructed using a manual or automated media server. Examples of preferred embodiments of media servers are included in concurrently filed PCT application ser. no. \_\_\_\_\_, attorney docket no. 604.31-PCT, which is incorporated herein by reference.

It is also contemplated that many advertisements will be directed to a single advertiser, and therefore may have only a single branding graphic. The term "advertisers" is used herein in the broadest possible sense, including any entity trying to impact the behavior of people. In many instances the desired impact will include motivating the viewer to purchase goods or services. In other instances the desired impact may be to cause the viewer

to vote in a given manner in an election, or a poll. In still other instances the desired impact may be of a very general nature, perhaps increasing societal awareness of alcoholism.

It is also contemplated that advertisements may be co-sponsored by more than one advertiser. The term "co-sponsor" is used herein to mean that at least two different  
5 advertisers have included information identifying themselves or one or more of their brands in a given advertisement. The identifying information may be a name such as Coca-Cola™ or Home Depot™, a design such as the Nike™ swoosh, or any other trademark or trade name. Particularly contemplated identifying information includes graphical images relating to the advertiser's name, products, or services, known in the field as branding graphics. Details  
10 of methods and systems involving co-sponsored e-commercials are described in previously filed application serial no. PCT/US99/22952, corresponding to attorney docket 604.16, which is incorporated herein by reference. Whether from the same advertiser or different advertisers, a given advertisement may advantageously have anywhere between one and five branding graphics on a single page, and even higher numbers of branding graphics are also  
15 contemplated

The branding graphics may or may not have navigational importance in the advertisement 36. One possibility is that they can be hyperlinks to websites. Another possibility is that they can navigate among multiple pages of a multi-paged advertisement.

Advertisement 36 may advantageously include an identification code. Such codes  
20 serve to individually link preferences, interests or other data obtained from previous advertising campaigns with particular records in a prospects database (not shown). If, for example, a viewer indicated in response to a previous campaign that he has no interest in certain types of clothing, that information could advantageously be stored in the prospects database, and employed in subsequent campaigns to avoid sending that person advertisements  
25 relating to such clothing.

Advertisement 36 preferably includes tracking software that facilitates tracking of a viewer's responses to the advertisement. The tracking software preferably interacts with the viewer's computer to upload data relating to the viewer's responses (i.e., the tracking information) from the viewer's computer to a distant server, i.e., a computer that is not local  
30 to the viewer, and that receives the tracking information.

The tracking information can be as simplistic as whether or not the advertisement 36 was ever received by the viewer, and if so when it was opened. More sophisticated tracking data may include file opening time, video start and stop times, cursor positioning, and forwarding of the advertisement to others. Such information may advantageously be stored in the "cookies" section, or preferably in the registry of the viewer's computer. Where the viewer clicks through to one or more web sites using hyperlinks 36D, such click-throughs are also preferably tracked. It is especially contemplated that at least one of the web sites accessed by a click-through tracks at least some viewer activities, and even more preferably also contains a video component and an audio component that may or may not be the same as that included in the advertisement.

The tracking information may or may not be sufficient to match up responses with individual viewers. Suitable methods and systems directed to tracking are described in previously filed application serial no. PCT/US99/23824, corresponding to attorney docket 604.07, which is incorporated herein by reference.

Advertisement 36 is preferably distributed via e-mail by a high volume electronic mailing company that sends out perhaps hundreds of thousands or even millions of messages per month. An exemplary such company is eCommercial.com, Inc. based in Southern California, USA. The distributor may or may not host its own servers. Advertisement 36 is preferably transmitted as e-mail over the Internet, but can be transmitted over any suitable network, including local area networks, wide area networks, public networks, private networks, and so on. Because of the high traffic involved, the distributor may advantageously employ outbound trafficking technologies such as those described in PCT application serial no. PCT/US99/22948 titled "Load Balancing Via Message Source Selection", filed October 12, 1999, U.S. Provisional application serial nos. 60/158926 titled "Message Content Based Routing", 60/158925 titled "Dynamic Routing via Shortest Delivery Time", 60/158993 titled "Historical Delivery Time Based Routing Tables", all filed October 12, 1999, and concurrently filed PCT application titled "Outgoing Message Load Balancing", respectively, each of which is incorporated herein by reference.

In Figure 2 a preferred method 200 is depicted in a flowchart format, including the steps of: providing a plurality of rich media advertisements 210; distributing the advertisements by e-mail 220; classifying the advertisements according to a classification scheme 230; and displaying a plurality of hyperlinks to the advertisements in a web site

according to the classification scheme such that selection and viewing of individual ones of the advertisements is facilitated 240.

Thus, specific embodiments and applications of systems and methods of conducting advertising campaigns have been disclosed. It should be apparent, however, to those skilled  
5 in the art that many more modifications besides those already described are possible without departing from the inventive concepts herein. The inventive subject matter, therefore, is not to be restricted except in the spirit of the appended claims. Moreover, in interpreting both the specification and the claims, all terms should be interpreted in the broadest possible manner consistent with the context. In particular, the terms "comprises" and "comprising" should be  
10 interpreted as referring to elements, components, or steps in a non-exclusive manner, indicating that the referenced elements, components, or steps may be present, or utilized, or combined with other elements, components, or steps that are not expressly referenced.

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of conducting an advertising campaign, comprising:  
5 providing a plurality of rich media advertisements;  
distributing the advertisements by e-mail;  
classifying the advertisements according to a classification scheme; and  
displaying a plurality of hyperlinks to the advertisements in a web site according to  
the classification scheme such that selection and viewing of individual ones of  
10 the advertisements is facilitated.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the rich media advertisement includes a video clip.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the rich media advertisement includes a consumer  
oriented value proposition.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the rich media advertisement includes a business  
15 oriented value proposition.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of distributing by e-mail includes:  
selecting a plurality of prospective viewers from a list of prospects;  
selecting at least one of the plurality of advertisement from a list of advertisements;  
and  
20 sending a copy of the selected advertisement to each of the prospective viewers.
6. The method of claim 5 wherein the step of sending includes sending at least one of the  
copies of the advertisement as an e-mail attachment.
7. The method of claim 1 wherein the classification scheme classifies at least some of  
the plurality of advertisements at least in part according to products being advertised  
25 therein.
8. The method of claim 1 wherein the classification scheme classifies at least some of  
the plurality of advertisements at least in part according to relevant dates.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the classification scheme classifies at least some of the plurality of advertisements at least in part according to targeted populations.
10. The method of claim 1 further comprising providing at least some of the plurality of advertisements with their own URL addresses.
- 5 11. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of displaying comprises listing the hyperlinks in a table displayed by a searching service.
12. The method of claim 1 wherein the web site is not controlled by a company that funds the plurality of advertisements .
13. The method of claim 1 wherein at least some of the plurality of advertisements  
10 contain cross-branding.
14. The method of claim 1 wherein a first group of the plurality of advertisements is funded by a first advertiser, and a second group of the plurality of advertisements is funded by a second advertiser distinct from the first advertiser.

**AMENDED CLAIMS**

[received by the International Bureau on 30 August 2000 (30.08.00);  
original claims 1-14 replaced by new claims 1-12 (2 pages)]

1. A method of conducting an advertising campaign, comprising:  
providing a plurality of rich media advertisements;  
5 distributing the advertisements by e-mail by selecting a plurality of prospective viewers from a list of prospects; selecting at least one of the plurality of advertisement from a list of advertisements; and sending a copy of the selected advertisement to each of the prospective viewers, at least one of which is sent as an e-mail attachment.  
10 classifying the advertisements according to a classification scheme; and displaying a plurality of hyperlinks to the advertisements in a web site according to the classification scheme such that selection and viewing of individual ones of the advertisements is facilitated.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the rich media advertisement includes a video clip.
- 15 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the rich media advertisement includes a consumer oriented value proposition.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the rich media advertisement includes a business oriented value proposition.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein the classification scheme classifies at least some of  
20 the plurality of advertisements at least in part according to products being advertised therein.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein the classification scheme classifies at least some of the plurality of advertisements at least in part according to relevant dates.
7. The method of claim 1 wherein the classification scheme classifies at least some of  
25 the plurality of advertisements at least in part according to targeted populations.
8. The method of claim 1 further comprising providing at least some of the plurality of advertisements with their own URL addresses.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of displaying comprises listing the hyperlinks in a table displayed by a searching service.
10. The method of claim 1 wherein the web site is not controlled by a company that funds the plurality of advertisements .
- 5 11. The method of claim 1 wherein at least some of the plurality of advertisements contain cross-branding.
12. The method of claim 1 wherein a first group of the plurality of advertisements is funded by a first advertiser, and a second group of the plurality of advertisements is funded by a second advertiser distinct from the first advertiser.

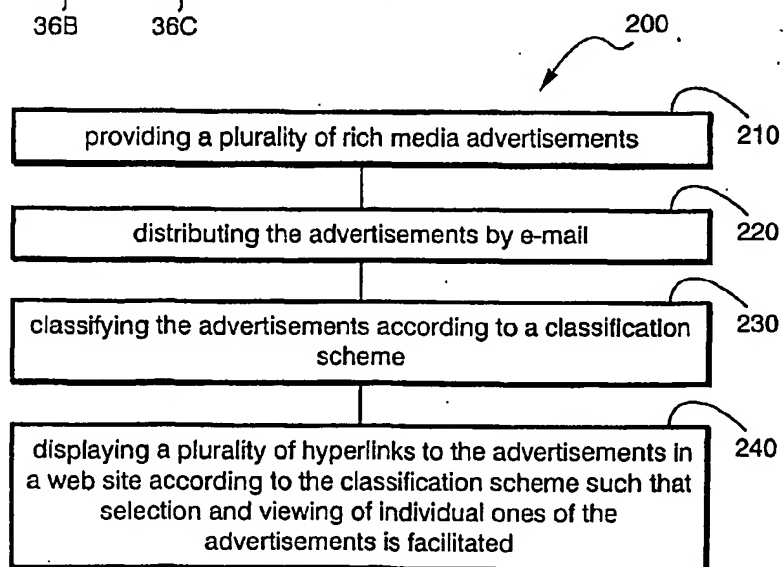
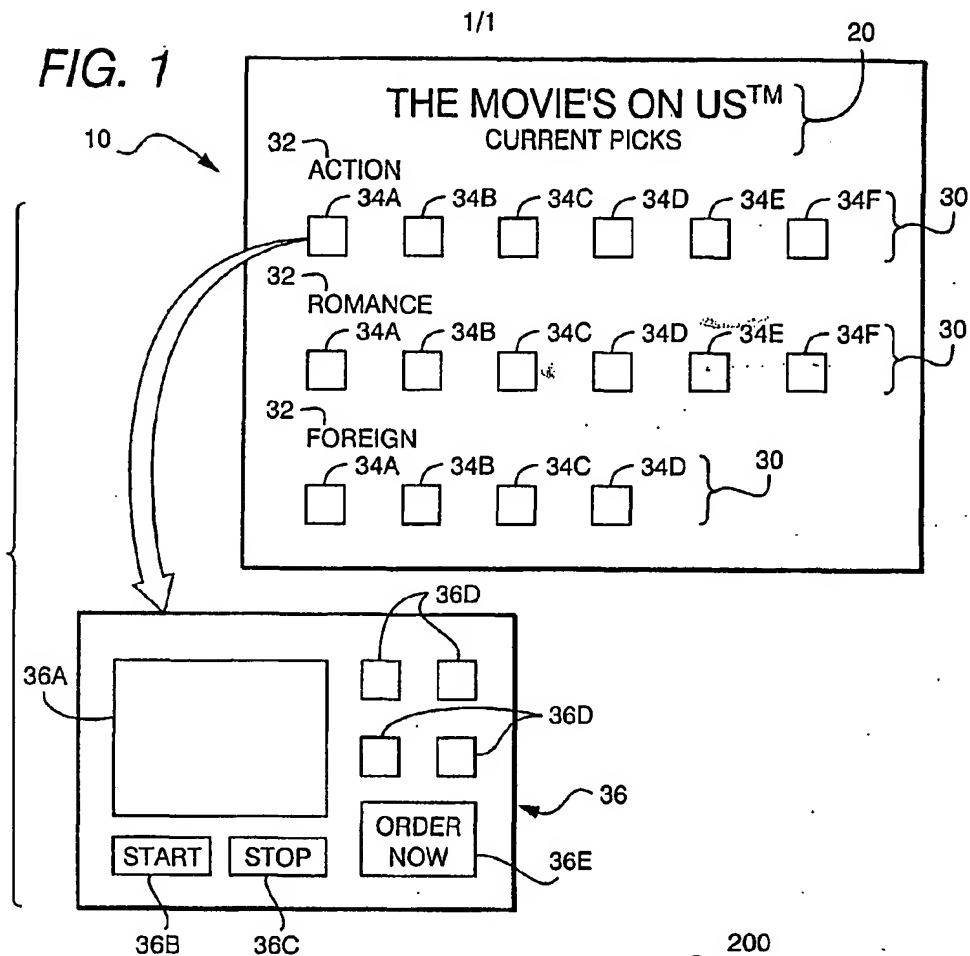


FIG. 2

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

PCT/US00/08170

**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER**

IPC(7) : G06F 17/30

US CL : 705/26, 27

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

**B. FIELDS SEARCHED**

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 705/26, 27

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

**C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages                 | Relevant to claim No. |
|-----------|--|-----------------------|
| Y         | US 5,819,092 A (FERGUSON et al.) 06 October 1998 (6.10.98), Entire Document, especially col. 1-12. | 1-5, 7-14             |
| Y         | US 5,809,481 A (BARON et al.) 15 September 1998 (15.9.98), Col. 2, line 39-50.                     | 1-5, 7-14             |
| A         | US 5,937,037 A (KAMEL et al.) 10 August 1999 (10.8.99), Entire Document.                           | 1-14                  |
| A         | US 5,636,346 A (SAXE) 03 June 1997 (3.6.97), Entire Document                                       | 1-14                  |
| A         | US 5,903,869 A (JACOBSON et al.) 11 May 1999 (11.5.99), Abstract.                                  | 1, 6                  |

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.
 ☐ See patent family annex.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| * Special categories of cited documents:  | * later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention  |
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Date of the actual completion of the international search

14 JUNE 2000

Date of mailing of the international search report

30 JUN 2000

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## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

PCT/US00/08170

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
|-----------|--|-----------------------|
| A         | US 5,923,252 A (SIZER et al.) 13 July 1999 (13.7.99), Entire Document.             | 1-14                  |